Introduction

Since the 1800’s, two factors have remained constant in the city of Woonsocket; immigrants/minorities, and poverty. Starting with French immigrants in the late 1800’s the majority of the residents of Woonsocket live at or below the poverty level. Because of this there has been less importance placed on higher education and more on maintaining a source of income which, for over 100 years, has meant finding a job in the labor force. Also, opposed to other cities, there is no real portion that is better-off than the others. All of these factors have resulted in a cyclical effect causing poverty to be an ever-present part of Woonsocket.

Woonsocket high school is the only high school in the city. Statistical averages from the school, compared to the state, are significantly worse across the board, from attendance and graduation rates to standardized test scores. This report will cover statistics comparing the economic status of the Woonsocket population with the performance of the Woonsocket High School student body.

Community Background

Income/Poverty

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Woonsocket | Rhode Island |
| Median Household Income | $39,329 | $55,975 |
| Median Family Income | $60,071 | $71,724 |
| All families below poverty level | 18.2% | 8.9% |
| All people below the poverty level | 22.2% | 12.8% |
| Children under 18 below poverty | 35.2% |  |
| Females w/ no husband | 52.3% |  |
| Percentage on food stamps | 20.0% |  |

Race/Ethnicity

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Woonsocket | Rhode Island |
| White | 77.7% | 81.4% |
| Black/African Americans | 6.4% | 5.7% |
| Asian | 5.4% | 2.9% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 14.2% | 12.4% |
| American Indian and Alaska Native | 0.4% | 0.4% |
| Total Population | 41,186 |  |
| Population ages 0-19 | 10,942 |  |

District Summary/School Analysis

NECAP Scores

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| NECAP Assessments | Woonsocket | Rhode Island |
| 11th Grade Math | 20% | 34% |
| 11th Grade Reading | 67% | 79% |
| 11th Grade Writing | 33% | 50% |
| 11th Grade Science | 12% | 32% |

Teacher-Student Ratio

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Qualifications and Teacher-student Ratio | Woonsocket | Rhode Island |
| Teachers with Emergency Certification | 4% | 1% |
| Not Highly Qualified Teachers | 5% | 3% |
| Teacher-Student Ratio | 1:11 | 1:11 |

Student Body Poverty Info

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Student Characteristics | Woonsocket | Rhode Island |
| Student eligibility for subsidized lunch | 72% | 46% |
| Students Receiving Bilingual Services | 8% | 6% |
| Students Receiving Special Education Services | 15% | 20% |

Safe and Supportive Schools Definitions

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Woonsocket | Rhode Island |
| Attendance Rate | 84% | 91% |
| Chronic Absenteeism | 36% | 17% |
| Percent Graduated in 2012 | 64.9% | 77.1% |
| Percent dropped out | 21.7% | 11.9% |
| Percent Received GED | 3.7% | 3.2% |
| Percent still in school | 9.7% | 7.8% |

Conclusion

As evidenced by the above information, Woonsocket is considerably worse-off than the majority of Rhode Island in terms of both economic status and academic performance and it is importance to examine how the two affect each other. Because of the economic status of the city as a whole there is less funding for the school; this means less qualified teachers and supplies for the students. With teachers that are not experienced in handling a classroom you get a teacher that is most likely indifferent or unable to control a rowdy group, leading to less teaching being done and more time enforcing rules or dealing with problems that may arise. This may attribute to the chronic absenteeism and thus the high dropout rate. Less supplies for the students means the more they have to buy themselves, and with a student body already in poverty it’s not unreasonable to assume that these supplies cannot be bought easily. Another factor that may contribute to the high dropout rate is the number of children in Woonsocket who are below poverty level (35%). Older siblings who are still in high school yet old enough to work may need to focus on earning enough money to support their family. All of these factors have resulted in a cyclical effect keeping the Woonsocket community in poverty and the student body struggling to keep up with the state average in terms of academic performance.